Using the *Five Improvisations* of Charles Tournemire as a Source for Improvisation Pedagogy

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-Roman numerals/Arabic refer to the five improvisations and bar numbers according to the Rupert Gough transcription (exercises are the examples without references)

-Tournemire's style generally: quite high in the manuals, short-breathed (textures change frequently), not much counterpoint, not many suspensions, lots of trills/tremolos

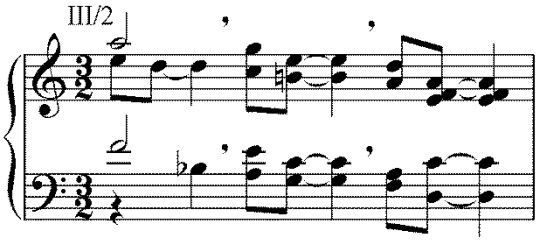
-with diatonic patterns (those without accidentals), repeat with different mentally added key signatures

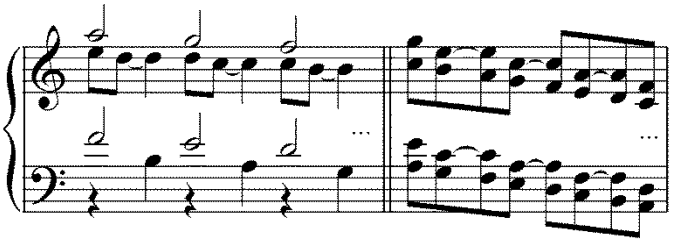
-for exercises, try to complete pattern to end of keyboard

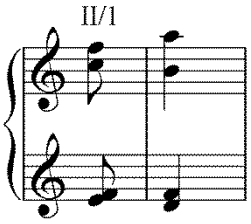
Chords and Chord Shapes

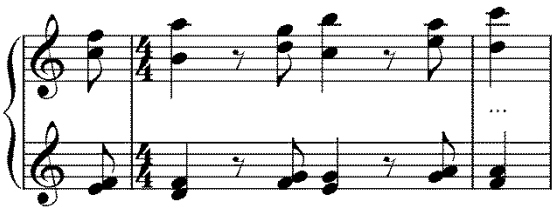
seventhes are the most common chords

diatonic seventhes (staying within key):

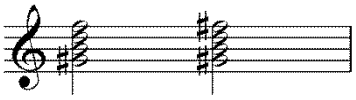


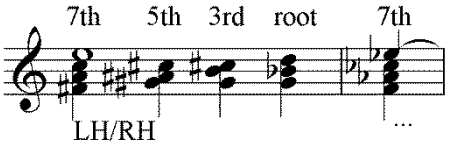






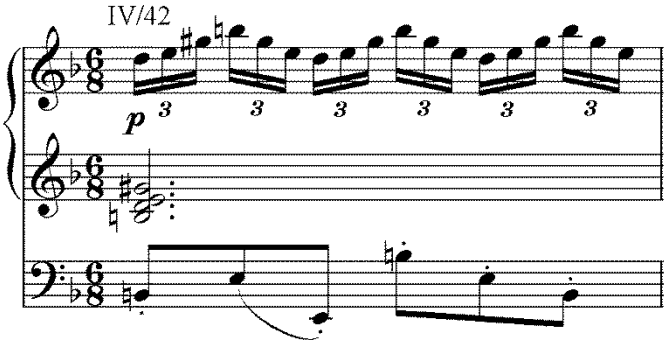
the two most important chromatic (out-of-key, usually) seventhes are the diminished and half-diminished (practice by keeping one note steady, going through 4 possibilities for half-diminished):

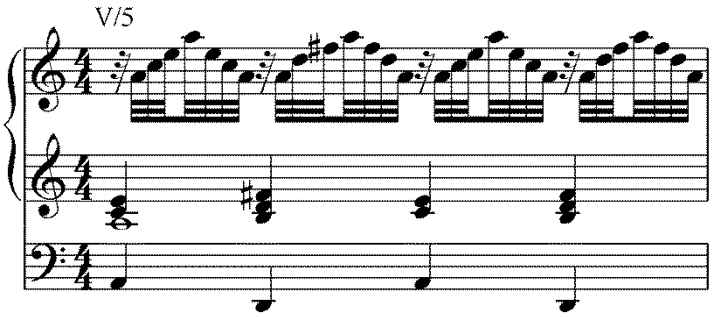




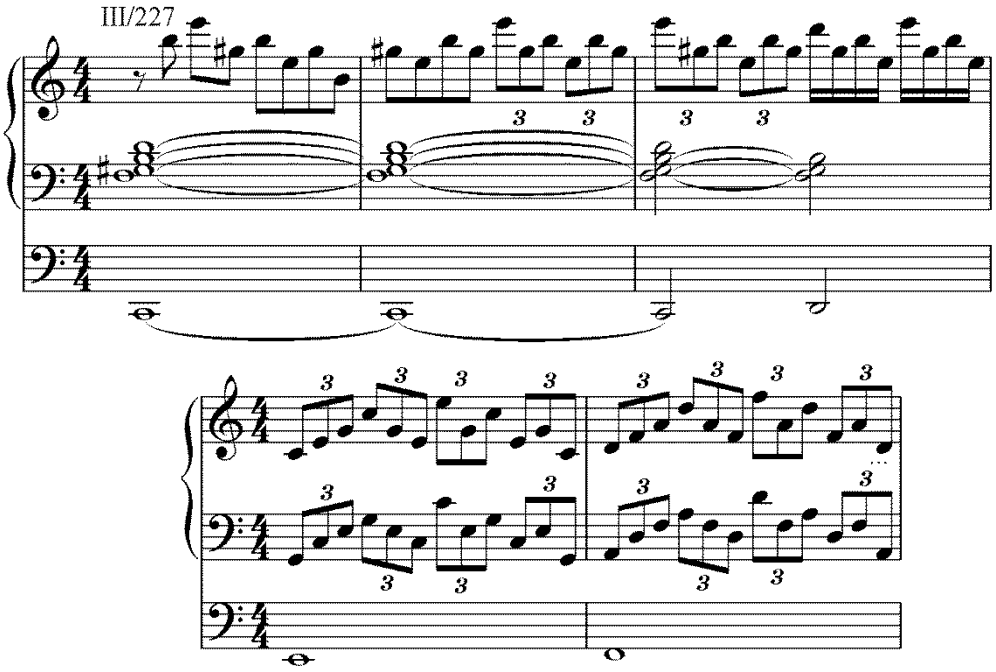
Articulating chords

chords are often in an arch-shape arpeggio, and usually in the RH (the number of notes in the solid form, minus one, will be the natural grouping of an arch form, unless it starts with a rest; e.g., a 4-note chord wants to be in triplets):

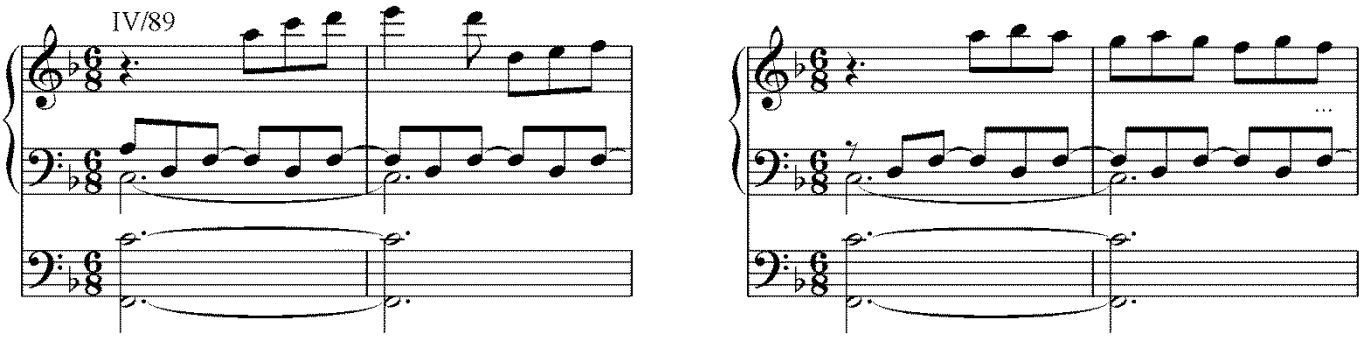




or they can be in a zigzag arpeggio (practice solid form first):

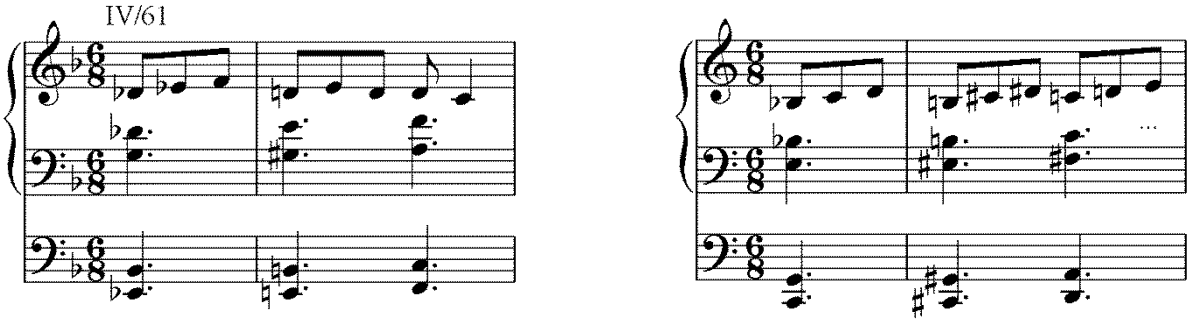


in triplet motion, chord tones can alternate with ties into the beat:

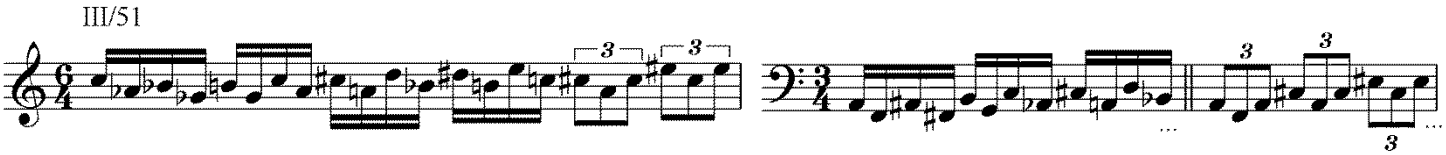


From Chord to Chord

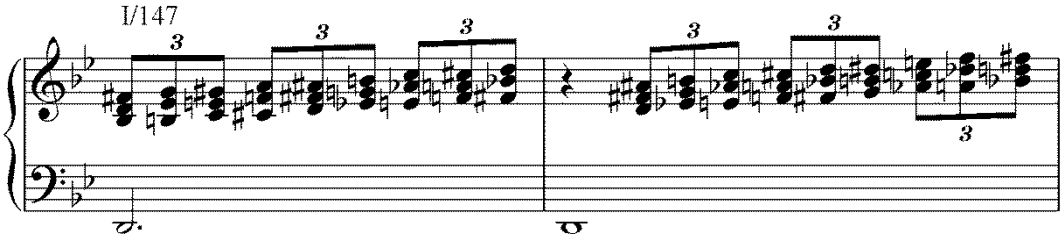
motion of parts by semitone (often ascending):



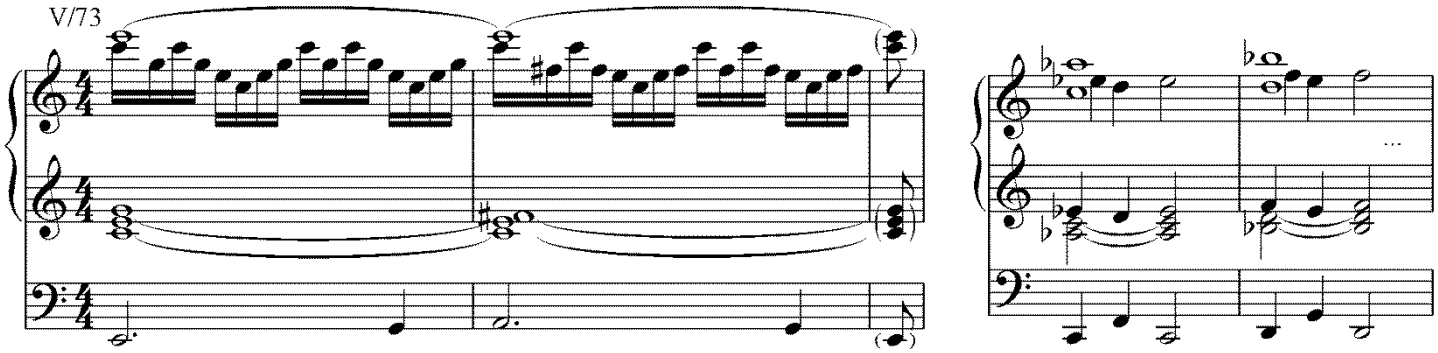
major thirds are often chained together chromatically:



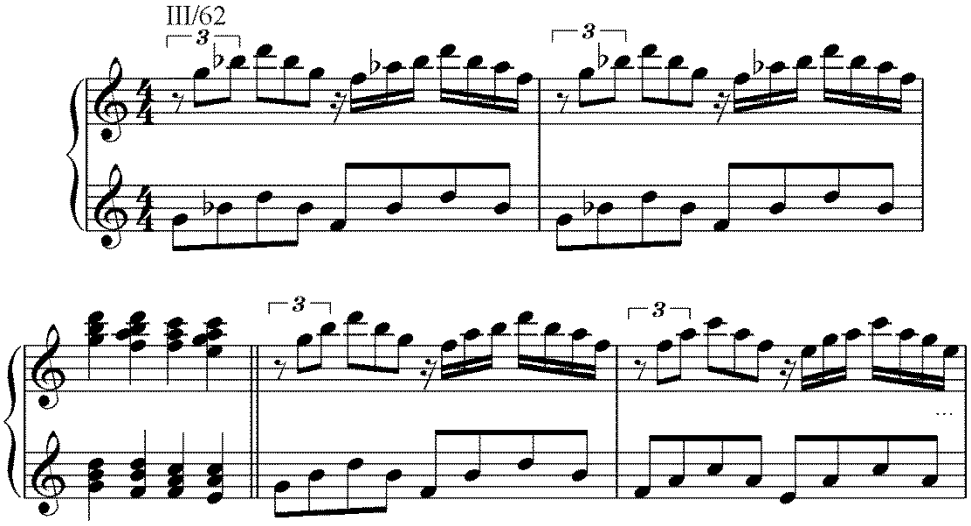
augmented triads also often move chromatically in long sequences (chromatic motion often comes at the ends of sections):



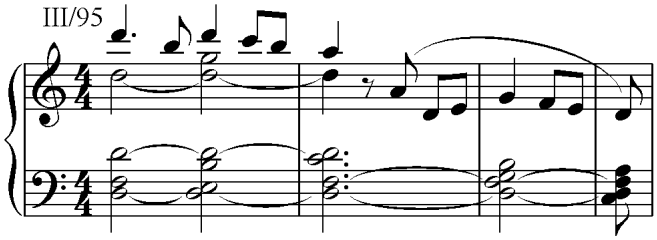
vi add6 (or iv half-dim 7 in first inversion) as a neighbor chord to major triad:



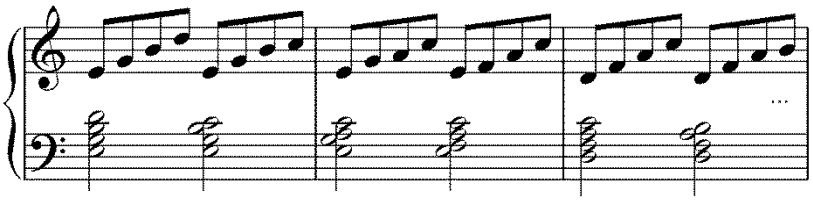
frequently, a third is kept stable, while other voices move stepwise (Tournemire likes to repeat short sections, and to go back and forth between 2 chords in a see-saw motion, like here):



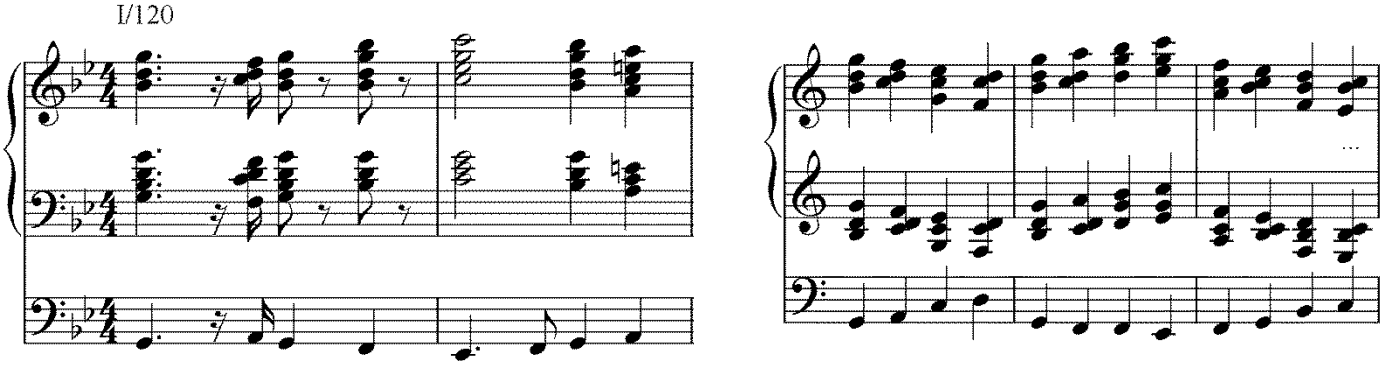
sometimes, the bass is kept the while different chord possibilities above it are explored:



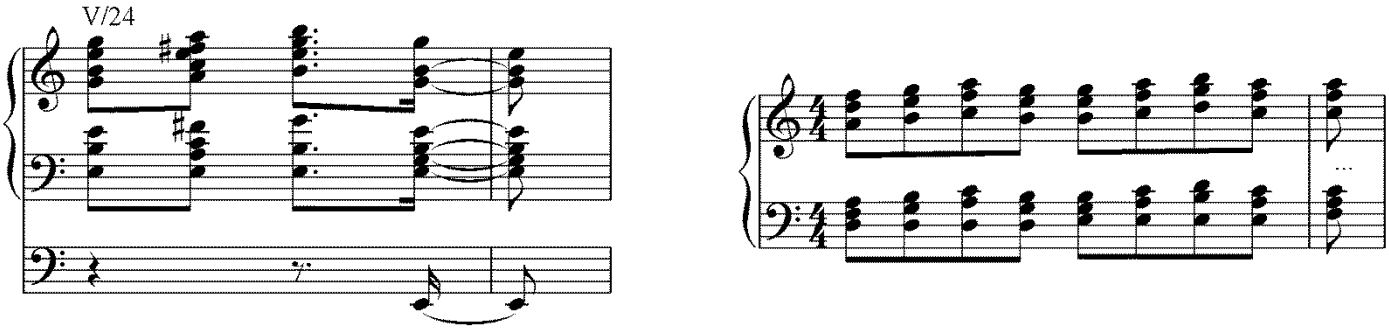
“Jacob’s Ladder” sevenths to practice keeping bass the same for four seventh chords (like everything, try ascending as well):



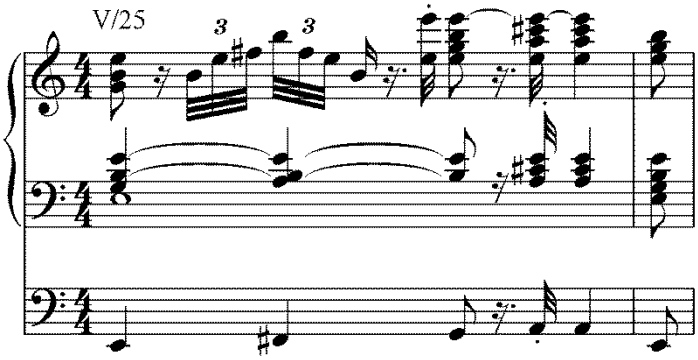
diatonic, contrary-motion harmonization is common (the hands are often locked in similar shapes):

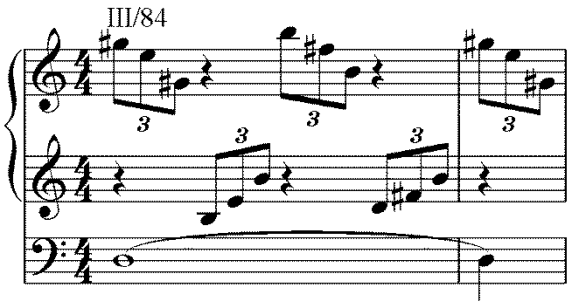


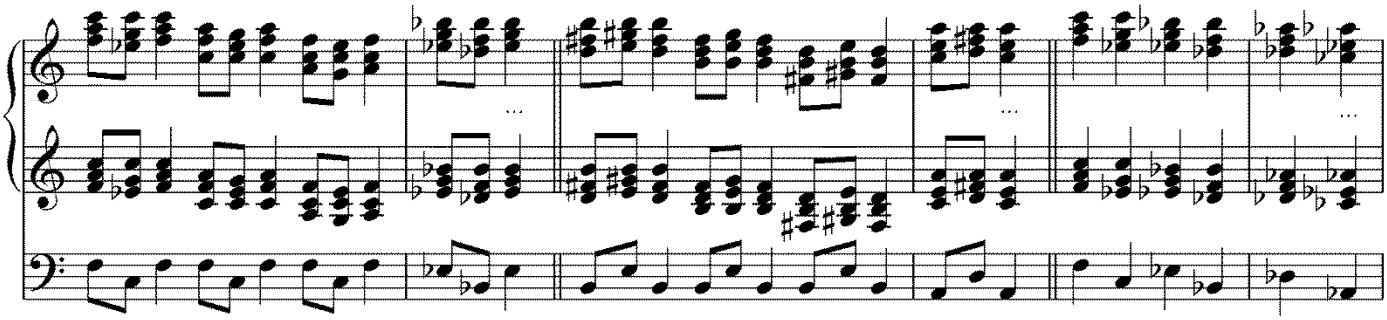
a “pinkie pedal” (very common to thicken sound) under a diatonic harmonization:



motion by fourths, but IV-I (a Dorian plagal) or v-I (a Mixolydian perfect):

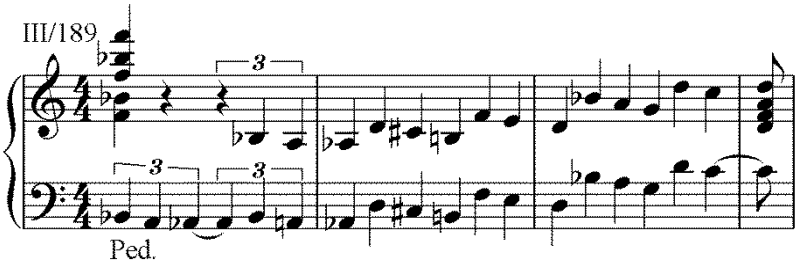


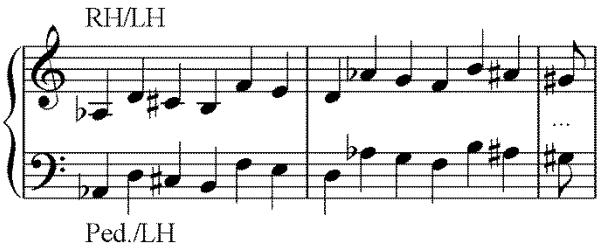




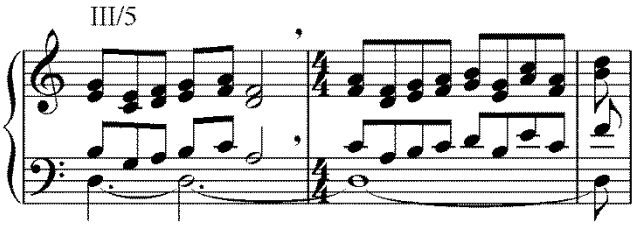
Thickening a Tune with Parallel Motion

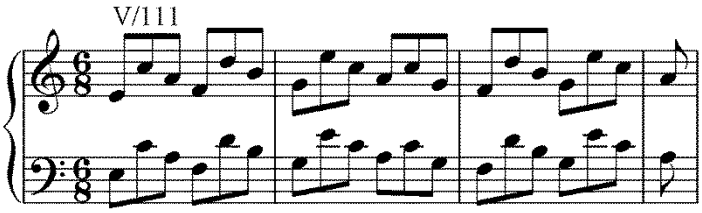
parallel octaves are common:

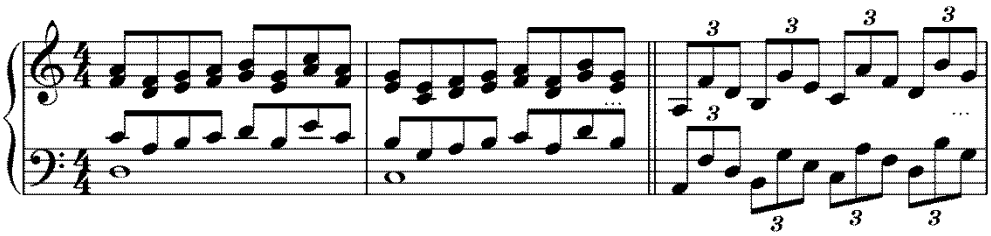




triads (usually inverted) can also be used to parallel a scale or tune:

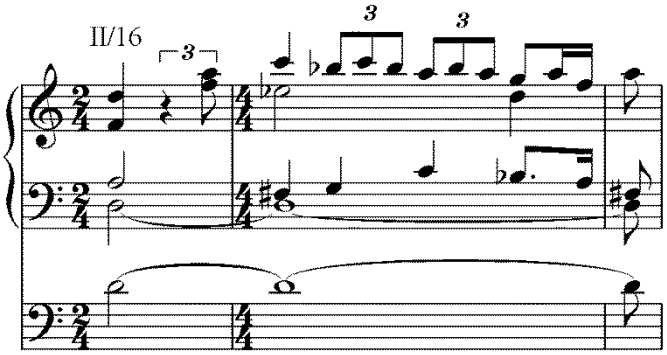


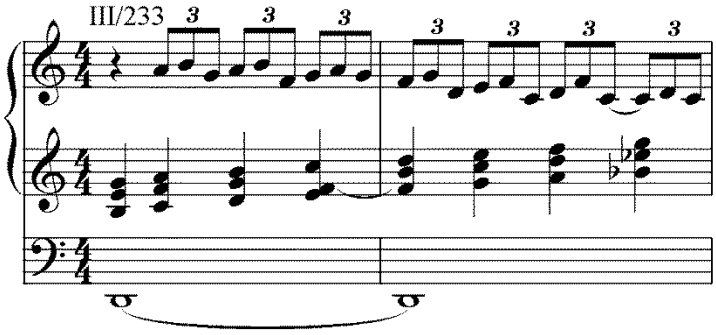


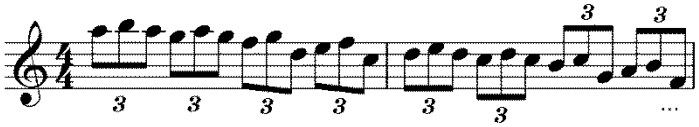


Ornamenting Scales

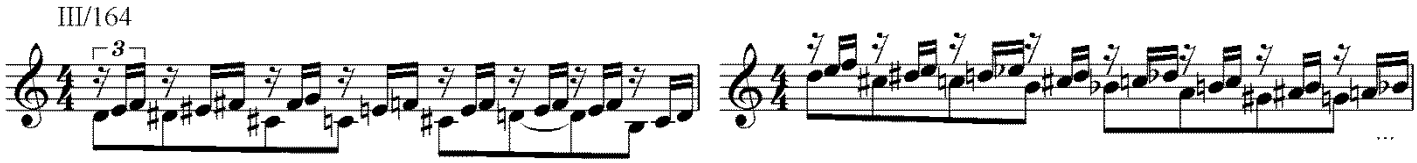
scales are often ornamented with triplets (and accompanied with diatonic contrary motion in the other hand):





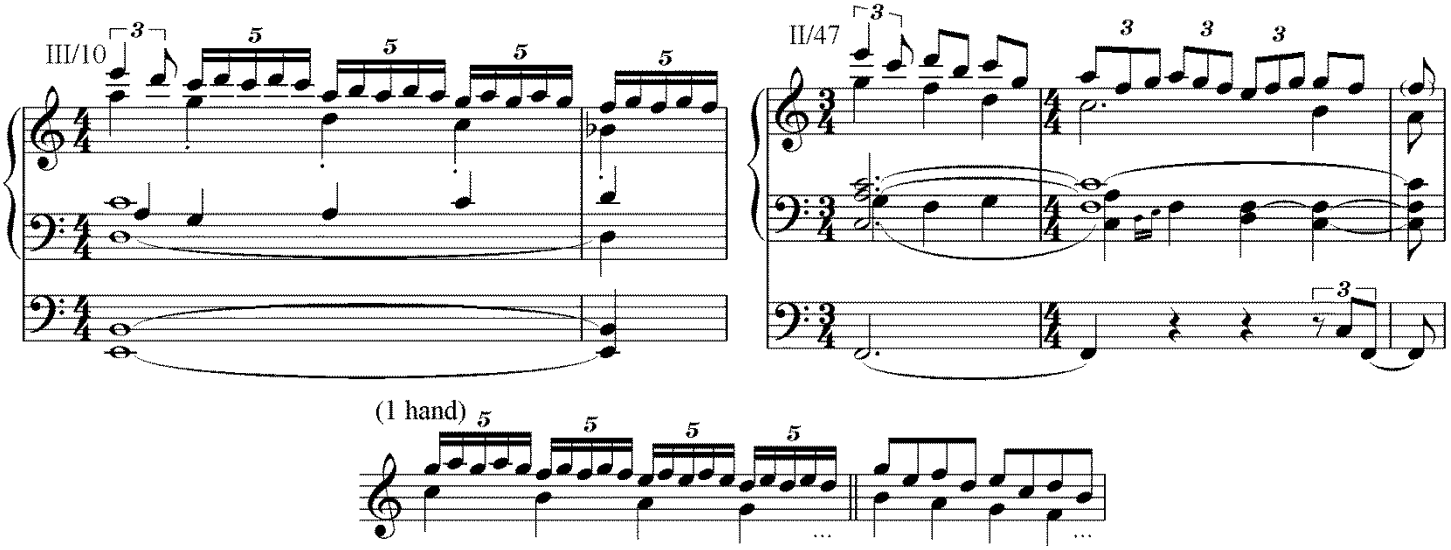


chromatic scales also:

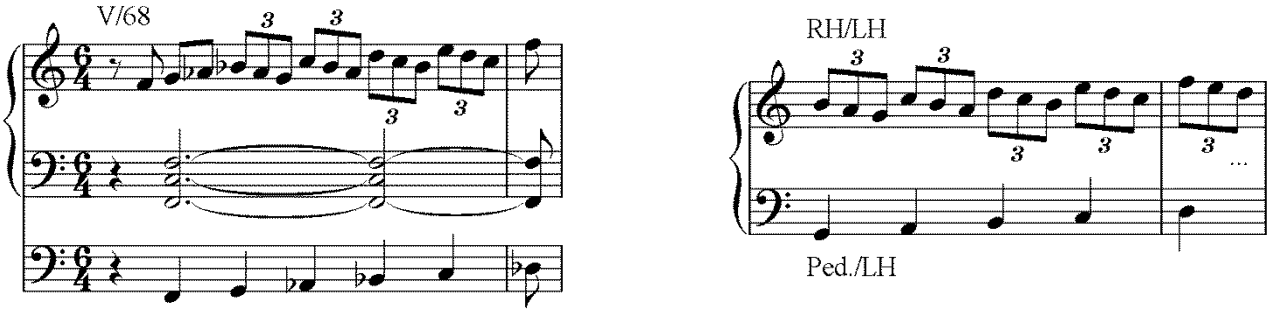


Combining Parallelism and Ornamentation

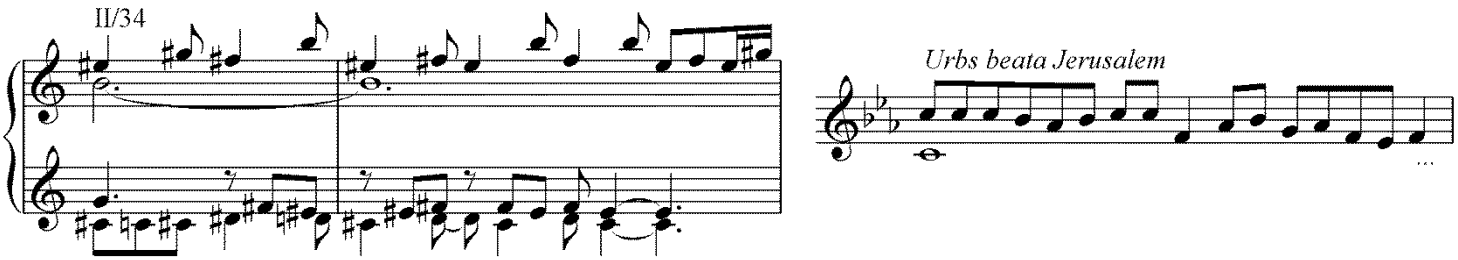
often, the scale is presented with parallel fifths or sixths in one hand, with the top voice ornamented:



parallel tenths combined with triplets:

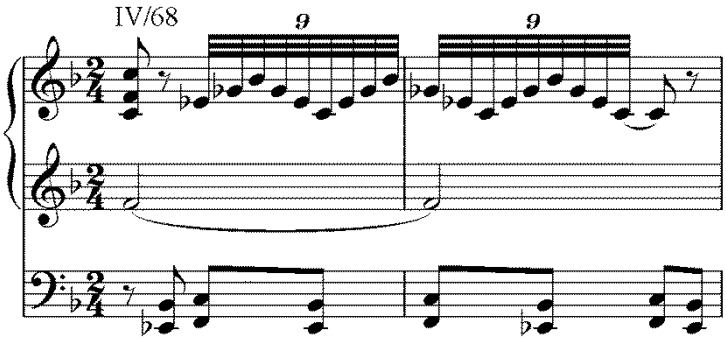


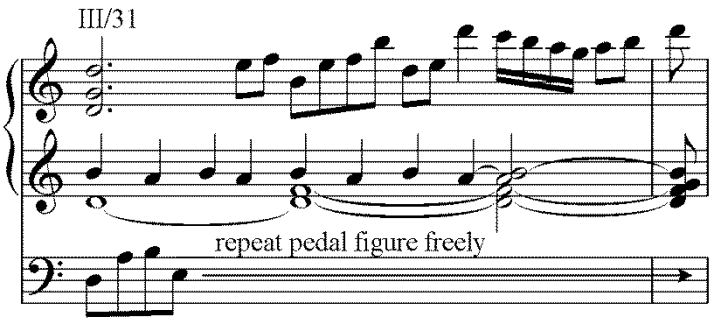
often, there are two ideas in one hand; the most basic is the pinkie, sometimes thumb, pedal:

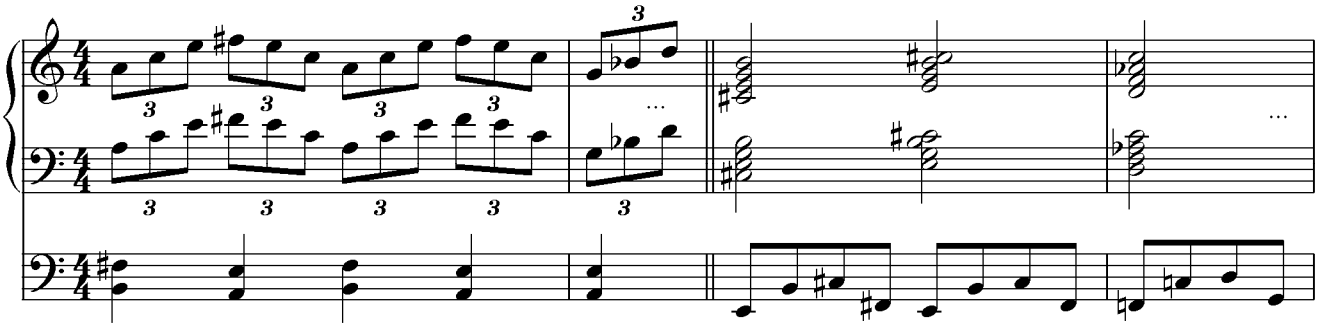


The Pedals

a pedal motion with each foot on two notes making an ostinato pattern:



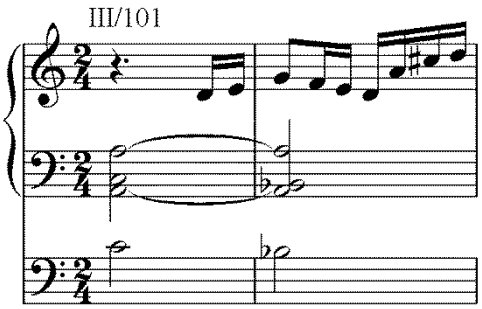




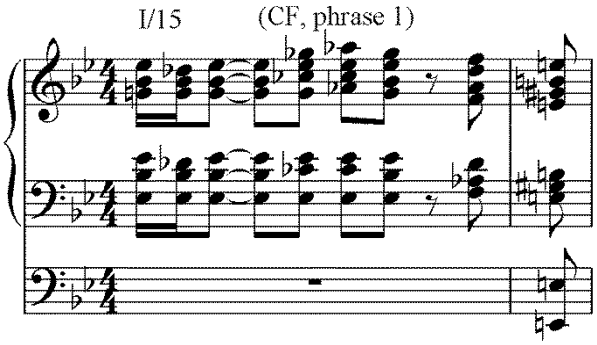
From Section to Section

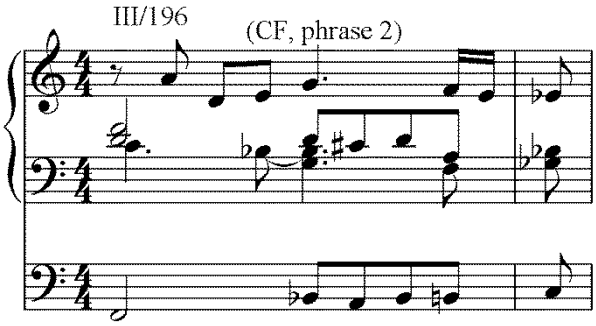
two minor second surprises to avoid stasis:

keep the bass, add the minor second above (often with a minor or diminished triad built on the flat seventh):

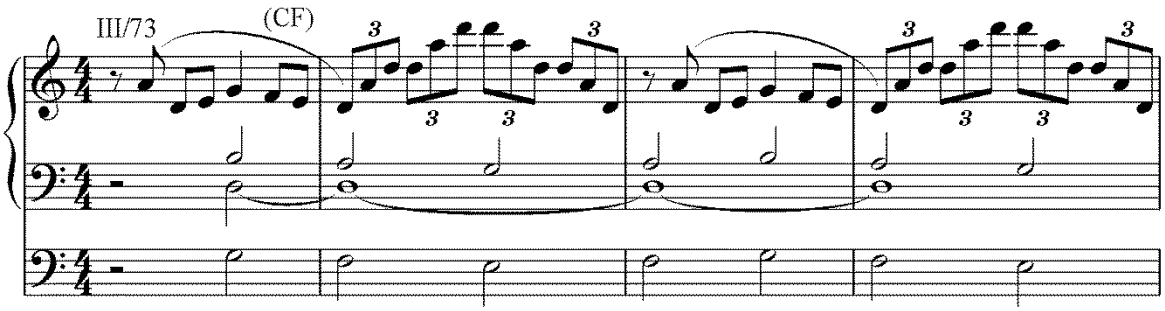


end a phrase on raised “do” of tune:

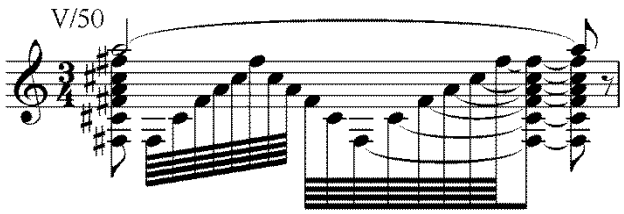




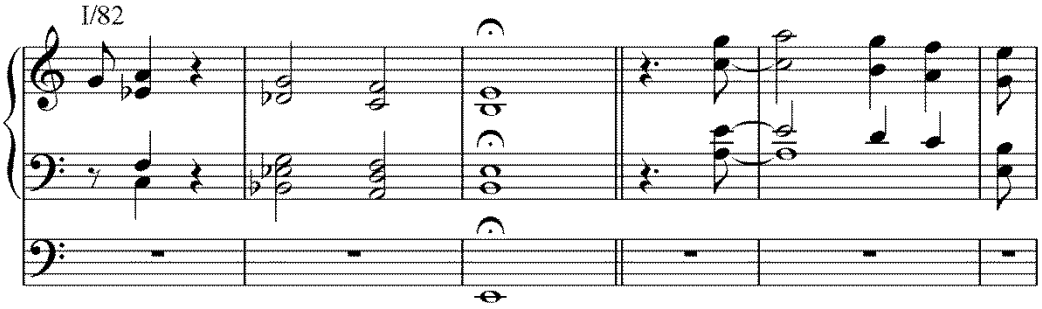
small arpeggio flourish as refrain between phrases of tune:



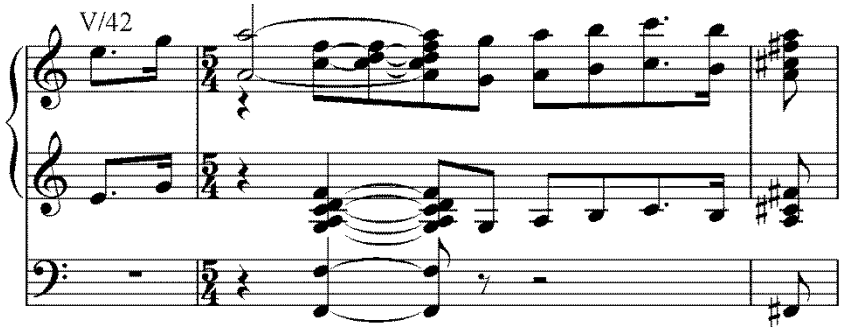
often, big arpeggios end with an upward-rolled, held chord to end section:



a new section might start with a variation of the conclusion of the previous section:



sections both start and end with dotted octaves presenting the main tune:



Tournemire always ends in the same key he began in.